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ABSTRACT

This handbook details how group leaders can adopt Project EASE (Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences), a program designed to provide opportunities for older adults and young people to interact in ongoing activities. Although the handbook is geared for children ages 9 through 13, it is adaptable for other ages and can be used in the classroom, as well as with after-school programs and youth organizations. Part 1, "Overview of Project EASE," discusses the importance of fighting negative stereotypes of older adults, describes the focus on youth groups for early adolescents, presents the group leader's role, and outlines the project options. Part 2, "Planning Project EASE," discusses introducing the project to the youth group, locating a senior organization, joint planning, implementing the project, and tips for a successful project. Part 3, "Project Options," discusses three types of implementation: (1) joint service, focusing on a community or charitable need; (2) shared group activity, developing personal relationships through mutually enjoyable activities; and (3) one-on-one matching, which can incorporate several short-term activities and is more appropriate than other options with elders at lower physical health levels. Part 4, "Presenting Your EASE Project to the Public," suggests ways in which the project may be presented at public events and through the media. Information on and activities for working in nursing homes are appended. Included with the guide are information sheets for leaders and youth and senior members, record sheets, activity forms, and resources. (KDFB)

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LEADER'S GUIDE

Project ease

Karl Pillemer, Stephen Goggin, Susan Matson, John F. Gerecitano, and Edith Lassegard, with Ruth Raimon-Wilson

A Cornell Cooperative Extension Publication

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In pocket on this page:

How to Use These Materials
Member's Guide
Project EASE Record Sheet
Information for Senior Participants
Resources for Intergenerational Programs

In pocket on inside back cover:

Warm-Up Activities
Polarity Activity
True-False Activity

HOW TO USE THESE MATERIALS

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WHAT IS PROJECT EASE?

Project EASE (Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences) is a model for developing intergenerational programs created by Cornell Cooperative Extension. Its goal is to bring groups of early adolescents (ages 9–13) together with senior citizens for meaningful, goal-oriented interaction. The materials in this folder will help you to implement a variety of projects with an intergenerational focus.

More than three years in development, Project EASE is based on the most current research regarding the effectiveness of intergenerational programs. It has been extensively field-tested and evaluated in over seventy youth groups. The materials do not assume any prior experience on the leader's part in intergenerational programming. However, experienced group leaders will also find useful new ideas here.

MATERIALS INCLUDED

- Leader's Guide
- Member's Guide
- Aging True-False Activity
- Polarity Activity
- Warm-up Activities
- Information for Senior Participants
- Project EASE Record Sheet
- Resources for Intergenerational Programs

LEADER'S GUIDE

This manual provides background on intergenerational programs and describes Project EASE. It acquaints you with the structure of Project EASE and presents three different project options your group can choose to carry out: Joint Service, Shared Group Activity, or One-on-One Matching. The leader's guide gives detailed instructions for planning an EASE project. The instructions give you a good idea of the time commitments and practical implications of the different projects.

MEMBER'S GUIDE

Ten member's guides are provided to you. The member's guide acquaints your group's members with Project EASE and gets them interested in aging-related issues. It contains some enjoyable activities for them to do at home. Packaged with the member's guides are project record sheets, useful for recording Project EASE activities at the end of the experience. Additional member's guides are available on request.

OTHER INSERTS

The folder also contains five other inserts, all of which are explained in the leader's guide. These include materials for two activities to be carried out by the youth group before conducting the intergenerational project (Polarity Activity and Aging True-False Activity). There is also an insert on suggested warm-up exercises for joint meetings with elderly persons, and a handout on "Information for Senior Participants" that can be reproduced. Finally, a listing of additional resources on intergenerational programs is enclosed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

We welcome questions and feedback on Project EASE. Please address any comments to

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MEMBER'S GUIDE

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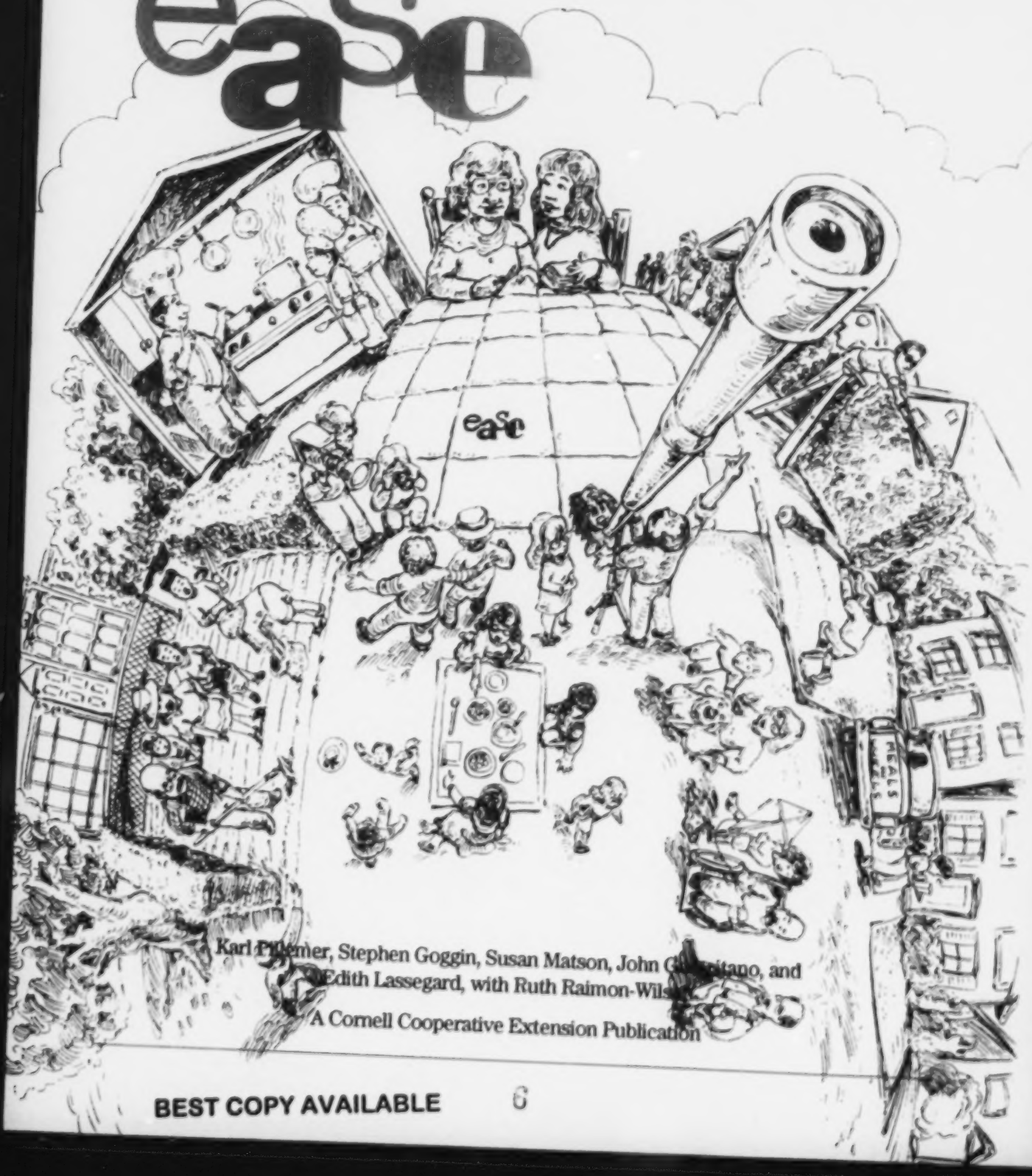

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Edith Lassegard, with Ruth Raimon-Wils[illegible]

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Helping You
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2	Introduction
2	Let's Begin by Looking at You
3	Stereotypes
4	Project EASE
5	Activity: Getting to Know You— A Talk with an Older Person

Please complete the activities in this workbook before your next group meeting, and remember to bring it back with you to the meeting.

INTRODUCTION

The ideas you have about older people may come from your grandparents and other older people you have met or heard about. Think about these people and older people in general (whom we sometimes call senior citizens). Think about the way old people are shown on T.V. Do you know where your ideas about being old come from?

A lot of older people in your community whom you don't know may be very different from the ones you've met before or heard about. To explore your ideas about being old, read through the next few pages of this guide and fill in the spaces given.

LET'S BEGIN BY LOOKING AT YOU

If you like playing basketball or reading books now, you may know a whole lot about basketball or books when you are older. You probably have likes and dislikes that are different from those of your friends at school. Older people are just as different from one another. Everyone has special interests and ideas, no matter what their age.

Some people like being outdoors, or reading books, or playing basketball. How would you describe yourself and the things you like to do?

Now imagine the kinds of things older people do.

List some things that old and young people might do together for fun or to help the community:

STEREOTYPES

Many young people think that all older people are the same. This is called a **stereotype**. We create a stereotype when we think that every older person is just like the older people we have heard about or seen before. For example, if your grandfather uses a wheelchair and you think that all older people use wheelchairs, you have a stereotype of older people.

There are stereotypes for young people too. For instance, some adults think that all kids wear sloppy clothes and listen to loud music, or that teenagers don't know how to save money. They probably base their opinions on something they've heard or someone they've seen. But that doesn't mean that all kids or teenagers are the same!

Can you think of stereotypes someone might have about YOU because of your age?

How does it make you feel when people have opinions about you before they know you just because of your age? Or because you are a boy or a girl? Or because you look a certain way?

You can see how stereotypes can make you feel bad. Stereotypes also can stop you from getting to know someone who might be fun to know. For instance, if you thought that all older people were grumpy and complained all the time, you wouldn't want to meet new older people. You might never meet an older person who is fun to be with.

The best way to put aside stereotypes is to meet a lot of new people. If you become friends with older people, you will start to see for yourself that everyone is different, no matter what their age is.

That's what Project EASE does: it gets young people together with older adults to meet and do activities together. You will meet with many different older people in a group, and you will have the chance to make a special friend. EASE stands for Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences, and that's exactly what you'll be doing.

PROJECT EASE

Project EASE is special because you will be **equal partners** with the senior citizens you meet! You will be working together, as partners, on the projects you choose.

To make this a fun and interesting project, a little planning is needed first. Your group leader will help you plan an activity to do with older people.

HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL DO IN PROJECT EASE:

1. COMPLETE TAKE-HOME TASKS.
   - Interview an older person.
   - Help your group leader make contact with seniors in the community.
   - Fill out a record sheet at the end of the project.

2. LEARN ABOUT AGING.
   - Explore stereotypes about aging (you can discuss the stereotypes people have about younger people too!).
   - Discuss your feelings and experiences as you and other members of your group do things with older people.
   - Learn ways to communicate better with people of different ages and with different life experiences.

3. TAKE COMMITMENTS SERIOUSLY.
   - Come to activities on time. Older people are busy too!

It takes time to make good friends with people of any age. It will take time for you and your new friends to get to know each other, but when you do, you will have a lot of fun and feel a sense of accomplishment in the end!

Before the next meeting, complete the following Project EASE activity.

ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW YOU—A TALK WITH AN OLDER PERSON

In this activity, you will get to know an older person who lives in your community by interviewing him or her. This person could be a neighbor, a friend of the family, or even one of your grandparents. There are only two things about this person that you should consider: the person you choose should live near you (or be visiting near you) so that you can interview him or her in person, and he or she should be at least 60 years old. Ask your parents and your group leader for suggestions.

1 When you have thought of someone, call the person on the phone. Ask if you can visit for about twenty minutes. Say that you would like to talk about what life was like when the person was your age, what he or she likes to do now, and what young people and senior citizens might do together.

2 Plan what you will talk about. Remember, you are going to try to get an idea of what it is like to be older person in our country today.

3 To start the interview, introduce yourself to your interview partner. Tell him or her a little bit about yourself:

- where you go to school
- what you like to do in your free time
- the activities you and your group members have worked on recently
- and anything else you would like to talk about

Give your interview partner a chance to ask you questions as well.

4 Then begin the interview. There are blank spaces after every interview question on the next page. After you have finished your interview, write down a few notes about what was said, so you will remember it later. At your next group meeting you will talk about what you learned from your interview partner, so make a few notes to help you remember!

5 Here is a list of questions that you can ask your interview partner. You do not need to stop with these. If you want to ask other questions, that is fine. Good luck!

- How do you think being a child or teenager has changed since you were young?

- What did you like to do when you were my age?

- How has your life changed now that you are older?

- Where do senior citizens get together in the community? What do they do there?

- What do you think about young people today?

- What kinds of community problems could a group of kids and older people work on together? What kinds of activities could they do together for fun?

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PROJECT EASE RECORD SHEET

Your name _____ Date _____

Group name _____ Age _____ Grade _____

1. What project option did you decide to do as part of Project EASE? (Circle one.)

Joint Service

Shared Group Activity

One-on-One Matching

Other _____

_____

2. Where did the project take place? _____

_____

_____

_____

3. Describe some of the activities you did with an elder group or partner. _____

_____

_____

_____

4. What did you learn about older people that you didn't know before? _____

_____

_____

_____

5. What did you enjoy the most about Project EASE? _____

_____

_____

_____

6. What do you wish had been different about Project EASE? _____

_____

_____

_____

7. What other kinds of activities with older people would be good for your group to try in the future?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Note to group members: Recording your thoughts and feelings in a journal after each Project EASE meeting will help you organize your thoughts for filling out the project record sheet. Journals also give you a chance to think back on your activities with seniors and reflect on what they mean to you.

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INFORMATION FOR SENIOR PARTICIPANTS

WHAT IS PROJECT EASE?

Project EASE (Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences) is an exciting new program developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension. The goal of Project EASE is to involve youth groups nationwide in projects that foster enjoyable and mutually beneficial relationships between young people and senior citizens.

Three model projects have been designed for Project EASE. Group members and senior citizens together will choose and participate in one of the following:

Joint Service: A youth group joins with a group of seniors to plan and carry out a community service project together. This project could involve any useful service such as improving a park or providing services to ill or disabled persons.

Shared Group Activity: A youth group and a senior citizen organization or an elder service agency participate together in an activity such as gardening, putting on a dramatic production, or preparing a meal.

One-on-One Matching: Youth group members pair up with senior citizens and visit them regularly. Activities are planned together and take place over time.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT EASE?

Participating in an intergenerational program has important benefits for both the young people and the senior participants.

Benefits for Senior Citizens

- Use skill and talents
- Contribute to the community
- Enjoy shared activities
- Make new friends, young and old
- Share knowledge, history, and traditions with youth

Benefits for Young People

- Learn new skills
- Meet new people and make new friends
- Develop a special relationship with an older person
- Build a sense of responsibility
- Learn about the community

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN PROJECT EASE?

You will be asked to participate in planning joint activities with the youth group members. All participants of Project EASE plan the project *together*; and your help will be extremely valuable. Your involvement also will ensure that the activity is of mutual interest.

Another aspect of your role is to get to know one or more of the youth group members. The most important objective of Project EASE is the development of meaningful relationships between youth and older adults. The real benefits of intergenerational programs result when young people and seniors participate in activities together on an equal basis. You will be an important role model for the youth group members.

Thank you for your interest in Project EASE!

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RESOURCES FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS

Special Projects Section
601 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20049
telephone: 202-434-6070

AARP collaborates with other organizations and agencies to provide intergenerational opportunities at regional, state, and local levels. AARP focuses its efforts on intergenerational programs that affect mid-life and older adults.

CENTER FOR UNDERSTANDING AGING

P.O. Box 246
Southington, Connecticut 06486-0246
telephone: 203-621-2079

CUA helps organizations nationwide to develop or expand aging education programs and intergenerational activities. Resource materials include a series of six guides on "Schools in an Aging Society" and a quarterly newsletter.

CENTER ON THE RURAL ELDERLY

University of Missouri-Kansas City
5245 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, Missouri 64110
telephone: 816-235-2180

Publications: *Directory of Intergenerational Programming—172 ways to link young and old; Intergenerational Relations*

ESTA: ELDERS SHARE THE ARTS, INC.

57 Willoughby Street
Brooklyn, New York 11201
telephone: 718-488-8565

A community arts organization dedicated to improving the scope of arts and humanities programs for older adults. ESTA's intergenerational programs are designed to increase intergenerational and cultural understanding and exchange through cooperation and interaction between generations.

GENERATIONS TOGETHER: AN INTERGENERATIONAL STUDIES PROGRAM

University Center for Social and Urban Research
121 University Place, Suite 300
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15260
telephone: 412-648-7150

A program dedicated to developing innovative intergenerational programs and researching their impact on the participating children or youth and older adults.

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GENERATIONS UNITED

c/o Child Welfare League of America
440 First Street, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20001-2085
telephone: 202-638-2952

A coalition of over 100 national organizations on intergenerational issues and programs, Generations United seeks to increase public awareness of intergenerational issues and to promote programs that increase intergenerational cooperation and exchange.

INTERAGES

Intergenerational Resource Center
9411 Connecticut Avenue
Kensington, Maryland 20895
telephone: 301-949-3551

A private, nonprofit organization funded by county government, county schools, and private contributions. The goal of Interages is to foster cooperation and understanding between generations.

MASSACHUSETTS INTERGENERATIONAL NETWORK (MIN)

c/o Elder Services
360 Merrimack Street
Building 5
Lawrence, Massachusetts 01843
telephone: 508-682-8685

MIN is a statewide coalition of people of all ages who believe in the importance of generations uniting to build better communities. MIN supports intergenerational approaches to community problem solving and provides technical assistance for program development, a newsletter, MINEWS, and a yearly conference.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR SERVICE LEARNING IN EARLY ADOLESCENCE

Center for Advanced Study in Education
Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York
25 West 43rd Street, Suite 612
New York, New York 10036-8099
telephone: 212-642-2946

The National Center is a resource for educators, youth workers, and policy makers seeking to meet the developmental needs of early adolescents. In the center's Partners Program, young adolescents serve at a senior facility and participate in seminars where they share experiences and learn about older adults, aging, and communication.

NYSIgN (NEW YORK STATE INTERGENERATIONAL NETWORK)

c/o Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies
281 Park Avenue South
New York, New York 10010
telephone: 212-442-1080

NYSIgN represents a group of organizations and individuals working together to promote intergenerational programs and policies in New York State that recognizes the benefits of generations working together. NYSIgN is composed of over 100 organizations and individuals and practices an open invitation for membership.

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Over the past decade, intergenerational programs have received increasing attention. Such programs are usually designed to serve youth, to serve elders, or to be mutually beneficial. As community groups, schools, and agencies have begun to see the advantages of intergenerational programs, a wide range of projects has been developed—from foster grandparenting, to intergenerational day care programs, to involvement of students in the care of nursing home residents.

Intergenerational programs fill several major social needs and provide positive outcomes to participants:

FOR YOUTH

Many young people today have few opportunities for meaningful interaction with older adults. Senior citizens can serve as role models for youth and can share their accumulated wisdom and knowledge with them. Elders also can teach youth special skills. Interacting more frequently with older people provides youth with a historical perspective that enriches their lives. Young people also learn about the aging process and develop a positive attitude toward their own aging.

FOR SENIORS

Many older adults benefit from interacting with youth. Contact with young people in intergenerational programs reduces social isolation and exposes elders to the fresh perspectives youth can provide. Older participants report that these programs allow them to feel useful, which in turn enhances their sense of life satisfaction.

FIGHTING NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES

Intergenerational programs are a highly successful way to combat negative attitudes and stereotypes, which may lead to prejudice. Such prejudice generates a fear that prevents interaction between the old and the young. Increased contact between the generations, when properly planned and implemented, can improve the attitudes of youth toward the elderly and of older adults toward youth.

WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT PROJECT EASE?

Many youth groups engage in projects that involve senior citizens. Often these are one-shot activities that involve no special preparation for group members. The most popular is visiting nursing homes at holiday times.

Unfortunately, such projects are often of little value to the group members or elders. Young people with no preparation or understanding of the aging process may become frightened and negative about what it is like to be old. Seniors may become discouraged if they see that they are being viewed negatively and stereotyped as dependent. The youth and older adults in one-visit projects have no time either to get to know each other and build relationships or to interact with each other on an equal basis.

The goal of Project EASE is to make intergenerational activities more meaningful for young people and for senior citizens. To accomplish this goal, Project EASE promotes three model projects that have the following characteristics:

- **Preproject education**: In Project EASE, activities to promote awareness and understanding of aging take place *before* an actual project starts.
- **Joint planning**: Project EASE includes a planning session that involves *both* youth and elders as equal partners.
- **Ongoing personal contact**: Project EASE focuses on longer-term commitments that allow real relationships to develop.
- **Equal partnership**: Intergenerational programs that focus only on youth serving elders can perpetuate negative stereotypes of the aged as dependent and childlike. Project EASE promotes activities in which young and older people collaborate as equals.
- **Structured planning**: The Project EASE materials provide detailed guidelines for the *process* of planning an intergenerational program. Rather than giving guidelines for a single specific project, Project EASE provides a flexible framework for selecting and carrying out a range of activities.

A FOCUS ON YOUTH GROUPS FOR EARLY ADOLESCENTS

Project EASE is designed primarily to be used by organized youth groups. In fact, it was developed in response to a lack of structured intergenerational programs that youth groups can easily adopt. Project EASE was originally created and tested in collaboration with 4-H clubs, which have an average of 8 to 12 members and whose leaders are volunteers. It is appropriate for use by a wide variety of organizations, including scouting groups, church youth groups, and after-school programs. It could also be used in the classroom. We believe that Project EASE can be adapted to the needs of virtually any youth group.

Project EASE was designed mainly for children 9 to 13 years old. The member's guide and activities are geared to this age range. In our field test, however, children as young as 7 and as old as 16 participated and had very positive experiences. Children younger than age 9 may need assistance reading the member's guide and will require closer supervision in the intergenerational activities.

GROUP LEADER'S ROLE

In Project EASE, the youth group leader plays a major role as organizer. The following are some of the major responsibilities of the leader.

1 Become familiar with Project EASE.

By reading the Project EASE materials you will learn about intergenerational programs and be exposed to a step-by-step process for starting one with your youth group. This manual provides you with both a planning process and detailed descriptions of three program models.

2 Help group members learn about aging and intergenerational projects.

Using Project EASE materials, help your group members learn more about what it is like to be older and about the stereotypes surrounding old age and youth.

Clarify and explain why the time spent in planning and developing relationships is worthwhile, and why doing things together on an equal basis is important.

3 Guide your group in the selection of an EASE option.

Assist members in choosing between the three project options. Make sure they decide on a project that is feasible and that considers transportation, time, and other possible constraints. Project EASE emphasizes an active role for youth in selecting, planning, and executing the intergenerational project.

4 Manage the logistics of the project.

Take responsibility for coordinating meetings with seniors.

Make sure there are arrangements for transportation to and from project activities for the members.

Monitor the progress of the project.

THREE PROJECT OPTIONS

The three project options in Project EASE—joint service, shared group activity, and one-on-one matching—are introduced briefly here. They are described in detail in Part III.

JOINT SERVICE

In this option, your group links up with a group of senior citizens wishing to become more active in the community. The *combined* group (youth and elders) assesses its community's needs and works on a service project of mutual interest. The community service project may involve helping other elderly or young persons or meeting some other specific need in the community. The service projects chosen can be either short- or long-term, but we encourage long-term projects because they allow for relationships to develop more fully. Even in short-term projects, however, as much interaction between youth and seniors as possible is encouraged.

SHARED GROUP ACTIVITY

In this option, a youth group joins with a group of senior citizens to engage in an activity of mutual interest. The two groups decide on some enjoyable activity that they can plan and participate in together—for example, dramatic activities or planting a garden. The combined group meets regularly—at least once a month and more often if possible. The chosen activity should lead to some tangible result, such as an end-of-project production or a flower show.

ONE-ON-ONE MATCHING

In this option, each youth group member meets with an older person on a regular basis. These visits are structured and goal oriented. For example, initial visits might involve having the elder-youth pairs interview each other about specific topics such as favorite pastimes, musical tastes, and so on. This could be followed up with joint activities of mutual interest. (One-on-one matching is similar to popular "Adopt-a-Grandparent" programs.)

The elders that participate in this project option can be healthy, active senior citizens, but this option also works well with homebound elders or persons in residential or nursing homes. The contact takes place over time and as frequently as is reasonable (every week is desirable), allowing close relationships to develop between the young people and the elders. A long-term activity is most likely to yield lasting effects. If youth group members have widely different ages, pairs of youth (younger with older) can meet with a senior.

Although it might seem complicated at first, planning Project EASE is actually relatively simple. **Remember: In Project EASE, joint planning with senior citizens is as important a learning experience for youth group members as is doing the intergenerational activity itself.**

There is likely to be a temptation to skip over the planning activities so as to "get right into *doing* something." And it may seem easier for you as the group leader just to go ahead and make decisions. But our extensive field-testing experience indicates that youth groups that carried out a solid planning process had much better intergenerational experiences than those that did not. And the youth group members and senior participants benefited greatly from being part of the decision-making process together.

We have broken down the process into six basic steps.

Step 1: Introduce Project EASE to Your Group. The group receives a brief description of Project EASE and a member's guide that includes a take-home interview assignment.

Step 2: Initial Planning Session. The first session involves only the youth group and provides an introduction to aging issues through fun "age games," as well as the opportunity to decide on the type of project.

Step 3: Select a Group of Seniors. After the first session, a group of senior citizens in your community are identified as partners in the project.

Step 4: Joint Planning Session. A joint planning session is conducted with elderly persons who will be participating in the program (or in some cases with a staff member from a nursing home or other agency).

Step 5: Implement the Project. Guidelines for carrying out the three types of projects are provided in Part III.

Step 6: End the Project. A final event can be planned to mark the successful completion of the project. After the project is completed, your group may wish to tell the public about your experience. (Some suggestions for public presentations are offered in Part IV.)

STEP 1: INTRODUCE PROJECT EASE TO YOUR GROUP

AGENDA

Introduce Project EASE (10–15 minutes)
Distribute and discuss member's guides and assignment to do at home (10–15 minutes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Member's guides (one for each group member)

Before the first planning session (Step 2), you will need to bring the youth group participants together for a brief introduction. This introduction will take at most a half hour. Make sure you have read through the member's guide and have copies for each member of your group. You may already know how you want to present Project EASE, but you can use the following introductory statement to get started:

We have the opportunity to participate in a new project with elderly people in our community. Project EASE (Exploring Aging through Shared Experiences) is designed to get young people together with older adults to do fun and interesting activities.

In Project EASE, we will find a group of older persons in the community to work with. They can be elders from a church group, a senior center, a nursing home, or some other group that is interested in working with us. With our new partners, we will decide on a project that interests us and work on it together.

For our project, we can choose from among three options:

The **joint service project** includes such activities as raising funds for a worthy cause, cleaning up a local park, helping other senior or youth organizations, or doing anything else we feel would help the community.

In the **shared group activity project**, we can choose any activity that interests us, as long as we can find a group of elders who share our interest. This activity does not need to be a community service project. It can just be something we are all interested in doing. For example, we can build on things we've already done, such as *(include anything your group has done that you feel is relevant)*. Or we can explore new areas such as *(mention activities your group has not done)*.

In the **one-on-one matching project**, each of us pairs up with an older person. Each pair then spends time visiting together. We can choose this activity as a group, or you and your partner can think up things that particularly interest just the two of you.

The goal of Project EASE is to become good friends with older persons in our community. At the same time, we'll learn things from each other and have fun.

Tell the members that the group as a whole will decide on a Project EASE option at the group's next meeting. In the meantime, they will have a short, fun assignment to complete before the next meeting.

Hand out a *Project EASE Member's Guide* to each group member. Introduce the member's guide by having the members follow along with you as you summarize it briefly page by page.

After discussing the member's guide in general, describe the interview exercise that the youth will be doing. Read the interview questions aloud, and ask the members if they can think of additional questions.

Finally, ask the youth to read the member's guide and to do the activities in it before the next meeting. Encourage them to share the guide with their parents, and instruct them to bring it with them to the next meeting.

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

You should read the rest of this manual carefully. In the next meeting, you will hear your group members' ideas about the projects they have considered and help them choose one option to pursue. The description of the options in Part III will help you to guide the group in choosing the option that best suits them.

STEP 2: INITIAL PLANNING SESSION

AGENDA

Discuss interview experiences (15 minutes)
Play age games (25 minutes)
Choose a project option (25 minutes)
Plan the next meeting (20 minutes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Polarity Activity materials
Aging True-False Activity (make one copy for each member)
Tape
Pencils
Flip chart or blackboard
Completed member's guides

In this session, your group's members discuss their interviews, think about aging, and learn about the projects they can work on with older members of the community. Your goals are to decide which of the three Project EASE options (joint service, shared group activity, or one-on-one matching) the group will pursue and develop a strategy to recruit senior citizens to work with your group.

You may wish to list the agenda for this session on a newsprint flip chart before the meeting.

DISCUSS INTERVIEW EXPERIENCES (15 MINUTES)

Initiate a group discussion about the experience of interviewing an older person. It is not critical that each and every member report on the interview. It is most important that you encourage members to discuss their experiences, share feelings, and explore intergenerational issues that arise. Make it clear that anyone can contribute to the discussion by offering ideas and suggestions based on their own experiences or by asking questions. These are some questions you can ask to get the discussion started:

- Whom did you choose to interview and why?
- What did you talk about?
- What did you like or dislike about the experience?
- Did you learn anything new?
- Is there anything you wish you had asked?

PLAY AGE GAMES (20 MINUTES)

POLARITY ACTIVITY (insert)

This exercise is designed to generate discussion on aging issues and to draw attention to the stereotypes group members may have about senior citizens.

AGING TRUE-FALSE ACTIVITY (insert)

Have your group members complete the "Aging True-False Activity." (You will need to make a copy for each member.) Use this activity, which was developed using textbooks on aging, to generate a discussion about stereotypes and aging. The answer sheet explains the answers to each question, and you can use this as an educational tool.

DISCUSSION

In addition, you may want to raise the following questions for discussion. Ask the members to refer to the first three pages of the member's guide.

- What stereotypes do people have about older people or younger people?
- In what ways can stereotypes be harmful when dealing with a young or older person?

Suggestion: If interesting questions or issues arise, jot them down to discuss with the elder visitors during later activities.

CHOOSE A PROJECT OPTION (20 TO 25 MINUTES)

1. The "Leader's Worksheet for Session 1," found at the end of this section, summarizes the three Project EASE options. Use this as a guide while your group discusses the project options. Space is provided for notes.
2. Ask the group members to refer to their member's guides and discuss some of the activities they think elders and youth might share. You may want to list their ideas on a large newsprint flip chart. Divide the flip chart page into three areas, one for each option, and write each suggestion under the appropriate option (use the leader's worksheet to help you classify each idea).
3. After the discussion, ask your group to decide which of the three options they would like to pursue. The group is not deciding on a specific project just yet—that will be done after a group of elders has been recruited. Right now, your group is just choosing one of the three options. Keep in mind the size of your group, the transportation and materials needed, and the resources in your community.
4. After your group chooses one option, review with them its description. Make sure your group understands what the option involves.

PLAN THE NEXT MEETING (10 TO 15 MINUTES)

1. Before the next group meeting, you will recruit older persons in the community who are interested in participating in your project. You may already know a group of seniors who are interested in working with you. If not, you may wish to involve the group members in this search, and have them accompany you when you visit the elders you hope to recruit as partners.
2. Tell the group members that these seniors will probably be at the next meeting (described in Step 4, below), and that they will participate in choosing and planning a specific project. All final decisions about the project or activities will be made as an intergenerational group. You may want to mention the activities that are planned for the next meeting (introductions, warm-up activities, planning discussion) so the members can look forward to it!

JOINT SERVICE

- Group works to fill a community need or help a charitable cause
- May require fund-raising
- Encourages youth and elders to be active in their community

SHARED GROUP ACTIVITY

- Group works on a mutually enjoyable activity for fun or interest
- Goal is to develop personal relationships with elders
- Project can build on previous group activities that can be shared with seniors

ONE-ON-ONE MATCHING

- Individual pairs work on activities they choose
- Can use many short-term activities
- Works well with elders at lower levels of physical health

STEP 3: FIND A SENIOR ORGANIZATION

To state the obvious, to have an intergenerational program, you need a group of senior citizens to work with. It is desirable to have all or some of your youth group members work with you in approaching a group of elderly people. Realistically, however, our experience indicates that the youth group leader is often in the best position to recruit the seniors for the project.

In this section, we provide some suggestions for obtaining the participation of senior citizens. Be sure to ask your friends and co-workers about possible groups of seniors as well. If you have no prior knowledge of senior citizen groups in your area, you may find it a little frustrating at the beginning as you try to track down a willing senior group. But don't give up—all communities have several appropriate groups, agencies, and elderly residential settings that you can work with.

SELECTING THE RIGHT GROUP OF SENIORS

For the joint service option, a group of seniors active in their community is the most appropriate. There are active senior organizations in every community. Some are based in churches, synagogues, or other local institutions. Others are organized through local Area Agencies on Aging, which often keep lists of contact persons and phone numbers that you can use to contact the group.

Special interest groups of seniors in the community may match the interests of your group. Examples of good sources include quilting circles, craft clubs, and garden clubs. Volunteer organizations such as the American Association of Retired Persons can also be helpful.

For the shared group activity option, the same kinds of senior citizens groups can be approached. Residents of a nursing or residential home, or participants in a senior day care center, would also be appropriate for this option.

For the one-on-one matching option, your group can choose any group of seniors, although it may be most convenient to choose elders in a residential setting (elderly housing, retirement community, nursing home) so that joint meetings can be organized around one schedule. Senior centers and church groups are other possible sources of elders for this project.

A particularly good source of help in locating seniors for any of these projects is your local Area Agency on Aging. These regional agencies usually cover several communities (often an entire county) and act as central clearinghouses for information about aging. You can find out the name of the Area Agency on Aging that serves your community by looking in the telephone book or by calling your state's office for the aging. Another place to seek help is at local colleges or universities, many of which have gerontology programs.

Another possibility is the yellow pages. Look under "Adult Care Facilities," "Senior Citizens' Service Organizations," and related topics. Check with religious organizations in your area as well; many sponsor senior citizen groups.

CONTACT THE ORGANIZATION

Once you have identified several organizations with which you might work, call the contact person and ask if that group might be willing to participate in an intergenerational project. Give the person you speak to a brief overview of Project EASE and tell them that you would like to make an appointment to visit them at a time that is mutually convenient. Ask the contact person if he or she could invite a small group of the elders to meet with you when you visit.

Some organizations may not be able to accommodate another project in their busy schedules, but they may be able to suggest other organizations to contact.

VISIT THE ORGANIZATION

Your first contact with the organization can be an informal information session in which you get a feeling for the elders in the group and assess their interest in working with your youth group. If you can arrange to do so beforehand, send the elders copies of "Project EASE: Information for Senior Participants." If not, bring copies with you to help explain the goals and objectives of Project EASE. Make sure you have enough copies for all the elders at your meeting and for those who may be joining your group later.

Ask these elders if some or all of them can come to your next youth group meeting. (If the group is small, you might invite all the elders who will participate.) Remember that senior citizens often have busy schedules of their own, so it will help if you can be flexible about the timing of your next meeting. Be sure to leave your name and phone number with the group so they can contact you with any questions. In some situations, such as a residential facility, it will be more convenient to hold the next meeting there.

STEP 4: JOINT PLANNING SESSION

AGENDA

Introduction (5 minutes)
Warm-up activities (15 to 20 minutes)
Choosing a specific activity (25 minutes)
Planning (30 minutes)
Scheduling the next planning meeting (5 minutes)
Closing (10 minutes)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Name tags
Warm-up exercises
Flip chart or blackboard
Calendar (for scheduling future activities)

This intergenerational meeting is important because youth group members and seniors decide exactly what project they will pursue. Ideally, you, the members of your group, and the elder representatives will arrive at the most mutually appealing project option through careful discussion. In this discussion, keep the purpose of Project EASE in mind. You're not a work group—you're a group of older and younger people building intergenerational relationships and doing something interesting and fun together.

Again, it is useful to list your agenda for this joint planning meeting on a newsprint flip chart before the meeting.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINUTES)

Introduce your youth group and explain what it means to be a member. Give a little personal background about your group. Next, introduce Project EASE by summarizing the information in "Project EASE: Information for Senior Participants."

BREAKING THE ICE (15 TO 20 MINUTES)

Provide name tags to the participants in this session. Make sure all the youth and elders give their names and tell something about themselves. Choose one of the warm-up activities from the insert titled "Warm-up Activities" in the folder (or use a warm-up activity of your own that works well).

CHOOSING A SPECIFIC ACTIVITY (25 MINUTES)

Review the objectives of Project EASE and of the specific option chosen, then ask for ideas for possible projects. Let everyone, including yourself, feel free to voice any idea that comes to mind. Assign one person to be a recorder and keep track of all the ideas on a large piece of paper. If this exercise is particularly productive, go beyond the allotted time if you can.

Once you have a list of ideas, decide which are feasible for your intergenerational group. Keep in mind the following constraints if they pertain to your group:

- transportation
- time commitment
- physical limitations of any participants
- scheduling
- costs
- legal considerations
- other commitments of either age group

After narrowing your list, have the group decide which of the remaining ideas would be most enjoyable for all involved.

PLANNING (30 MINUTES OR MORE)

Once an activity has been chosen, ask the group to consider what will be involved. Planning is needed to assign roles, determine materials needed, address transportation needs, and set dates and times.

Another brainstorming session focused on the following questions may help get things started:

- Is transportation needed?
- When will you start the activity?
- Where will the activity take place?
- How long will the project take?
- Is outside help needed?
- Do you need to gather more information?
- Is there anyone in the group with special skills or contacts that can help?
- Can the project be broken down into smaller tasks that can be handled by pairs of youth and elders?

The members of your group may just touch on the topics that need to be addressed and decide that they need one or more planning sessions before starting the project. **Don't think of extra sessions as a waste of time: they are just as much a part of your project as the actual activity.** Planning and discussion time is important for the youth and elders because it helps establish relationships in a comfortable way. Project planning time also will result in a more successful experience. The amount of planning time required is a decision the group will need to make.

SCHEDULING THE NEXT PLANNING MEETING (5 MINUTES)

If your group decides additional planning sessions are needed, the next planning meeting should include the entire group and should be arranged for a time and place that is convenient for everyone. If your group is working with elders in a residential facility, you may want to hold this and future meetings in the facility.

CLOSING (10 MINUTES)

Have each group member describe his or her thoughts about their involvement in the project. Thank the group of elders for helping plan the activity. If all of the seniors who will be participating did not attend, give those who did attend enough copies of "Project EASE: Information for Senior Participants" to distribute to others in their group.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING MEETINGS

Further planning meetings should take place at mutually accessible places and times. You might find it useful to structure the meetings as you have structured the first joint planning meetings. Each meeting could have a starting warm-up activity and take your group one step closer to project implementation. You may want to set a regular weekly, biweekly, or monthly meeting time, or you may prefer to arrange one meeting at a time.

STEP 5: IMPLEMENT THE PROJECT

After careful planning of your intergenerational project, you're ready to jump in! Detailed project descriptions are provided in the following section (Part III). If things get bogged down along the way, you can always stop the wheels and have another planning session.

STEP 6: END THE PROJECT

Having a formal end to the project is very important. Presentations by the young people to the older participants, and vice versa, can serve as a final event. Presentations to other youth group members, at school, or to a group that benefited from a service project are good ideas. The purpose of a final event is to acknowledge what everyone did, so you might choose to give humorous awards for this purpose. Most important, this final session lets group members say good-bye to each other. Group parties or picnics are always a good idea.

Some youth and senior partners may have developed special relationships that they would like to keep up. Let your members know that the end of the project doesn't mean the end of their relationships, and encourage them to visit and write to their senior friends on their own. You might consider keeping in touch with the group of elders more formally by arranging future activities with them.

If your group has been very enthusiastic about its intergenerational experience, you may choose to start up another cycle of Project EASE, either with the same group or with a new one.

SOME TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

In our evaluation of Project EASE, we followed the progress of seventy youth groups and focused on thirty of these for in-depth study. The most successful projects had several points in common. We have summed up these "best practices" in the following list of "Do's and Don'ts."

1. *Do* plan *with*, not *for* the seniors. Although the logistics of a joint planning meeting with the seniors may seem difficult, the experience of working out a project on an equal basis with senior citizens is extremely valuable for youth group members.

2. *Don't* skip the planning stages in a rush to start an activity. In the most successful projects in our field test, the groups carefully completed the activities in the member's guide (including an interview with a senior) and did all the activities in the initial planning session. These groups got much more out of the intergenerational activities than did those who skipped them.

3. *Do* use your own informal contacts—friends, relatives, neighbors—to help you with Project EASE. In our field test, one group leader had an elderly friend who belonged to a crocheting group. The group invited the youth group members to join them and taught them to crochet. Then the intergenerational group crocheted items for a local hospital. So if you have trouble finding a senior citizen's agency to work with, try personal acquaintances.

4. *Don't* get discouraged if your early attempts to find a group of seniors are not successful. In our field test, despite some initial discouragements, every group that kept on trying to find senior partners was successful.

5. *Do* use the strengths and experience of your youth group in designing a project. For example, a youth group that focuses on animals could bring pets regularly to a nursing home. A scouting group that engages in outdoor activities could join with a group of active seniors in camping or fishing. Many projects your youth group does could easily become "intergenerational."

Experience with intergenerational programs indicates that three basic types of activities are very well suited for youth groups of early adolescents. These are **joint service**, **shared group activity**, and **one-on-one matching.**

In the following sections, these three project types are presented. Each section discusses special features that make the option different from the others, and why a youth group might want to select it. A list of specific project ideas is provided, and special planning considerations are raised. Then a detailed example is given of how a project was conducted, from beginning planning to completion.

JOINT SERVICE OPTION

WHAT MAKES THIS OPTION DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS?

The joint service option combines building youth-elder relationships with performing a service for the community. Your intergenerational group can choose any activity that it finds interesting and that the community will value. Cleaning a park, doing chores for homebound people, collecting canned goods for a food pantry, or raising funds for charitable organizations are possible ideas.

It is possible to choose a service project that relates to previous activities of your group. For example, if the group has worked on gardening, it might join with a group of seniors to beautify a city park. If pets have been a group focus, members might work with seniors to take pets into a nursing home. Building on group strengths is a good idea.

WHY SHOULD MY GROUP CHOOSE THIS OPTION?

Intergenerational community service addresses two worthwhile goals. It brings elders and youth together to form meaningful relationships while they perform an important and appreciated service for their community.

IDEAS FOR JOINT SERVICE PROJECTS

Improve the natural environment
- park cleanup
- recycling project
- composting project

Build or restore a community facility or area
- park
- playground
- play structure
- hiking, nature, horse riding, or bicycle trail
- cemetery
- local monument

Help other elderly persons
- deliver Meals on Wheels
- shovel snow
- shop for someone who is homebound
- mow lawns
- build a raised-platform garden for a home
- visit nursing homes

Teach a skill or special interest
- crafts
- pet care
- hydroponic or organic gardening
- health and safety
- energy conservation
- crime prevention

Organize recreation for children

Tutor young children

Paint a public mural

Make a film or videotape

Create a display

Publish a magazine on local history

Give demonstrations

Operate a consumer information campaign on
- safety
- consumer rights
- nutrition

Organize a neighborhood festival

Organize a drama troupe to entertain and inform

Some community service projects will require special knowledge or skills. Your group may find it useful to invite a knowledgeable person to your planning meetings to give his or her input. Some of the people in your new group may have friends or relatives whose special skills can be used in your project and who would be glad to share their expertise with the group. Often professionals in the community will happily volunteer their time for such a cause.

Don't be discouraged if your project requires an initial financial outlay. Local funding sources may be glad to lend a hand with this commitment, or you might consider linking up with a group that already has funding and experience. As an alternative, a fund-raising event can be a part of your project, giving the youth and elders even more time to interact and an even bigger sense of accomplishment. You also will find that community organizations and businesses are happy to donate or lend materials and supplies to a good cause.

Holding periodic planning meetings while the project is running is a good idea. Sometimes problems arise that weren't predicted, or certain steps take longer than expected. Stopping every now and then to evaluate your progress and plan ahead will help the project run smoothly.

When you are done planning, you should have a clear idea of all the aspects involved with the implementation of your project: for example, meeting times and places, materials necessary, and transportation needs.

AN EXAMPLE OF A JOINT SERVICE PROJECT

At the first meeting of the youth group, the group leader summarizes Project EASE and interests the group in doing an intergenerational project. Before the next meeting, the group members complete the exercises in the member's guide.

During the first full session of Project EASE, the members discuss the interviews they conducted with elders. They also brainstorm about possible projects, and the leader realizes that most of their ideas seem to fit the description of the joint service option, which the group decides to pursue. Three members volunteer to accompany the leader to recruit an elder organization.

Before the next meeting, the leader calls the local Area Agency on Aging, which provides a list of contacts in suitable organizations. When contacted, senior groups not able to participate provide other numbers and contacts. After just a few telephone calls, the leader finds a nearby senior citizen center interested in working with the group.

The leader visits the center with the three youth group representatives and discusses Project EASE with the center's program director. They decide this is a good idea to pursue and arrange for some members of the senior center to participate in the next group meeting.

In the joint planning session, the youth group members and elder participants get acquainted through several warm-up activities. In one activity, the youth pair up with elders and ask them about interesting times in their lives. Then each summarizes the information for the group. The senior then conducts the same interview with the young person. Then everyone plays a game designed to encourage interaction between old and young. Next, the group discusses plans for a service project. They decide that they could restore a local park that has deteriorated over the years.

The group seeks permission from the town to work on a small section of the park, raising funds for shrubs and trees and then planting them. This project will involve organizing fund-raising activities as well as seeking the advice of a landscape professional.

A second planning meeting is held at the senior citizen center. Now that the groups are familiar with each other, they begin to plan their project. They decide to ask a local representative from the parks department to come to the next meeting and help them decide how to approach their project. One participant has a relative who works for a nursery and agrees to ask her to discuss the best types of bushes and shrubs for the park as well as costs. They also decide to consult a Cooperative Extension agent.

The group agrees on the next meeting date, and they plan alternative activities in case one of the speakers cannot make the meeting.

At the next meeting, the group learns from the presenters what the park needs and what it will cost. They list their major tasks: (1) raising funds for the project; (2) preparing the small site at the park, which will be cleared and planted; (3) purchasing small bushes and shrubs; and (4) planting.

The group divides itself into four subgroups composed of both seniors and youth, each to discuss one of the tasks. After discussion, each subgroup tells the large group how they intend to accomplish their task, and more ideas are exchanged. The fund-raising group recommends that everyone participate in fund-raising efforts. Local nurseries will be asked to donate shrubs and bushes, a car wash and bake sale will be conducted, and various members will solicit donations from local businesses.

Fund-raising is successful and enough money is collected from various sources to purchase a dozen small bushes and shrubs. A Saturday is selected and representatives from the city parks department are on hand to help with plant placement. People passing by take note of this group spanning so many years, stop and chat, and give their congratulations on a needed community contribution. A reporter from the local newspaper has also been invited so the entire community can share in the project's success.

A picnic lunch has been planned by parents of the youth group members. During the picnic, humorous awards are given to everyone. Highlights of the experience are noted. One of the parents takes a group picture in front of the new bushes and shrubs. The young people will be responsible for getting copies of the picture to the senior citizen center.

Members of the intergenerational group have enjoyed their experience so much, they decide to start another project, and the members agree on a time for the next Project EASE start-up meeting.

SHARED GROUP ACTIVITY OPTION

WHAT MAKES THIS OPTION DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS?

The shared group activity option involves two groups engaging in a mutually enjoyable activity, rather than one aimed at community service. For this reason, the option is appropriate both for healthy, active elders as well as persons with physical limitations, such as those who live in residential or nursing homes.

The youth group and group of elders can choose to pursue just about any activity they like, as long as both age groups can participate in it fully. The primary goal is to foster interaction between a group of seniors and the youth group, and to develop relationships among participants.

Groups may wish to become involved in an area they have worked on before. A youth group that has horses as its theme, for example, may wish to plan an activity with seniors that relates to equestrian activities.

WHY SHOULD MY GROUP CHOOSE THIS OPTION?

The shared group activity option is an effective way to bring elders and youth together in rewarding activities. With this option, the youth group can choose to link up with any group of elders in the community. The only requirement is common interest in a mutually rewarding activity.

IDEAS FOR SHARED GROUP ACTIVITY PROJECTS

- A dramatic production
- Gardening
- Spelling bee
- Quilt making
- Theater games exploring aging issues
- A joint arts project
- Woodworking
- Crocheting
- Learning sign language
- Learning about how the local government is run
- Learning about local history
- Watching and discussing old and new movies
- Playing board games or cards
- Organizing workshops to be given by the youth and the elders
- A technology club, where youth and elders introduce the breakthroughs of their generation to each other; may include trips, for example, to museums or universities
- A travel club, where youth and elders share stories and pictures from vacations and trips and explore new places through videos and books
- Games from two generations
- Horseback riding
- Fishing
- Astronomy
- Handiwork
- Cooking
- Exploring ethnic foods and cultures

SPECIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

If your group is working with a residential or nursing home, it may not be possible for a representative group of elders to travel to your meeting for this joint planning session. You might consider holding this meeting in the facility with a few interested elders, or you may invite the activities coordinator from the home to attend in place of the elders. Always keep in mind, however, that the elders should have just as much input as your group members and they should be included in as many brainstorming sessions as possible.

AN EXAMPLE OF A SHARED GROUP ACTIVITY PROJECT

This section illustrates one way a shared group activity project can be conducted. As before, it is only an example. The Project EASE planning process can be used with almost any activity your group decides on.

As in the previous option, the group leader introduces Project EASE and interests the group in doing an intergenerational project. The group members complete the exercises in the member's guide and bring them to the next meeting.

During the first session of Project EASE, the youth discuss the interviews they conducted with elders. They then discuss project ideas and decide on the shared group activity option.

Before the next meeting, the leader talks to several local professionals in aging about possible senior organizations. Several people suggest a nearby retirement village as a possible location for the project.

The leader visits the retirement village with three youth group representatives and discusses Project EASE with the facility's program director and a few residents. They decide this is a good idea to pursue and arrange for several residents from the village to participate in the next group meeting.

The joint planning session takes place at the retirement village. The youth group members and several elder representatives discuss the shared group activity project and decide to conduct four workshops in the recreation room at the retirement village, one every other week. The youth will be responsible for two workshops and the senior group at the village will be responsible for two. They also discuss possible workshop topics.

They plan their second meeting, to which they will invite more residents of the village. They will meet again at the village and ask for additional ideas for workshop topics.

At that meeting, the shared group activity project is introduced to the other village residents who have come. After a few warm-up activities, they begin to discuss possible topics for the upcoming workshops. The village seniors will teach square dancing for one of their workshops and a craft project for the other. The youth will conduct two workshops on small animal care, using their own pets for demonstrations.

Two Thursday evenings and two Saturday mornings are set for the workshops. The two hands-on animal care workshops involve the residents from the retirement village, and the square dancing lessons and craft project require maximum group interaction. The workshops are well received and the youth group and senior group feel a genuine sense of accomplishment.

After the final workshop, the intergenerational group holds a potluck dinner at the village. During the dinner, highlights of the experience are noted, and a group picture is taken.

Many of the participants decide that they want to keep up their new relationships, and they exchange addresses and phone numbers with the promise to keep in touch.

ONE-ON-ONE MATCHING OPTION

WHAT MAKES THIS OPTION DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS?

One-on-one matching ensures that youth group members will develop individual relationships with the senior citizens they meet with. The program may not require as much initial planning as the other options presented, but typically the project is spread out over time with more frequent visits and a longer time commitment on the part of youth.

In general, the one-on-one matching option is more flexible than the other two Project EASE options. There is variety in the activities in which the youth and elders engage. Since pairs can work on individual projects, each pair can choose activities that suit the interests and abilities of the two people involved. This format allows the youth group members to work more easily with elders who are infirm or disabled.

One-on-one matching is also well suited for youth groups whose members range widely in age. In such a case, an older group member can pair with a younger member and both can meet with an elder, in a two-on-one variation of the project.

Often, one-on-one matching programs take place in settings where elders live. The group can go as a whole to a retirement community, elder housing complex, or nursing home, break into pairs to visit their partners, and come together again to discuss their experiences.

It is also possible, however, to visit elders in their homes. This can be especially helpful to homebound elders. Such pairing takes special coordination on the part of the group leader, as well as special considerations about working in private homes. It may be useful to bring in an expert on aging from the community to assist with a project that involves home visits. Such a project should undertaken only if it is possible to coordinate the activities with the regularly scheduled meetings of the youth group. In this way, the members can routinely check back with other members and with the leader about accomplishments and concerns.

The major goal of the one-on-one matching option is interaction between youth and elders through a schedule of visits that are frequent enough to promote meaningful relationships. At least at the start, these visits should be involve some kind of structured activity. Without a plan for what will go on in the visits, both the youth and elder partner can feel awkward and uncomfortable.

For example, the first visit could be devoted to having the both the youth and the elder interview each other about favorite activities. In the second visit, both partners could share a photo album of themselves and their families. Subsequent visits could then be planned around joint activities of mutual interest.

WHY SHOULD MY GROUP CHOOSE THIS OPTION?

One-on-one matching provides a great degree of variability in the activities pursued. Because projects may be designed to span one or more meetings, the pairs can engage in several different tasks during their time together. Elders and youth can have continued input on what will be done during their meetings, and the special talents of individuals can be shared.

This option lends itself to partnerships with local adult day care programs, retirement communities, and residential or nursing homes, reaching out to elderly persons who may not encounter young people on a regular basis. Further, it can involve elderly people who have difficulty participating in group activities because of impairment.

IDEAS FOR ONE-ON-ONE MATCHING PROJECTS

- Arts and crafts projects
- Sharing family traditions
- Oral history
- Woodworking
- Crocheting
- Field trips
- Music
- Cooking
- Painting
- Sculpting
- Pet care or grooming
- Making mini-terrariums in jars
- Card games from different generations
- Board games

SPECIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

If your group is working with a nursing home or with homebound adults, it may not be possible for a representative group of elders to travel to your meeting for a joint planning session. If this is the case, try to hold the joint planning meeting in the nursing home, or a place where the elders can join in the meeting. If there is still no way for the elder partners to attend this session, invite the activities coordinator or another staff person to come in place of the elders.

To pair the youth and elderly for one-on-one matches, you may want to recruit the aid of the activities coordinator (if applicable) at the senior organization. You can develop a questionnaire asking the elders about special interests, life occupations, and any other information that will help you to match elders with youth on the basis of common interests.

Alternatively, you may precede your visits with a "pen pal" period, in which the elders and youth get to know each other through letters before starting the actual project. The youth can all read the first group of letters and pick the elder with whom they will continue to correspond.

Forming the pairs is an important part of the one-on-one matching project you choose because the pairs should remain the same throughout the project. Over the time of the project, individual relationships will form, so these pairs should not be disrupted unless it is absolutely necessary.

You, the members of your youth group, and the elder representatives or staff person can generate a list of short-term activities that can be done sequentially with the seniors, or you can develop a plan for one long-term activity (such as oral histories). Coming up with some kind of a structure for the visits is a better strategy than unstructured "friendly visiting" for children in this age group.

AN EXAMPLE OF A ONE-ON-ONE MATCHING PROJECT

In this example, after they have completed the learning activities in the first meeting, the youth group members discuss possible projects and decide on the one-on-one matching option.

Before the next meeting, the leader contacts a nearby nursing home to see whether it would be interested in a visiting project. The activities director enthusiastically agrees to work with the group.

The leader visits the home with three youth group representatives and discusses Project EASE with the home's activities director. They decide this is a good idea to pursue and arrange for the activities coordinator and several nursing home residents to participate in the next meeting, which will take place at the nursing home.

At that meeting, the group members and the elders discuss what activities they would like to do together. In the past, the youth group has conducted several projects related to local history. It is decided that the youth will interview elder partners about experiences and historical events in the elder's lifetime.

The young people decide they will meet with their partners once a week for seven weeks. During each visit, they will cover a different topic with the elders, interviewing them about their experiences and then discussing how their contemporary experiences are similar or different. Topics will include schooling, holidays, recreation and entertainment, World War II, family life, experiences in the Great Depression, and jobs and work.

The group decides to pair up by having a short "pen pal" period. After the meeting, the activities coordinator asks the interested elders to write short letters to the youth. They are asked to describe themselves and their interests and suggest topics that they would particularly like to talk about with the youth group members.

The group members share these letters during another planning meeting, and each member chooses a partner from the group of elders. At this same meeting, the activities coordinator from the nursing home and the group leader tell the youth about what nursing homes are like and what to expect of the residents.

Once every week, the youth travel to the nursing home and conduct interviews with their partners. They keep a journal about the topics discussed and report on these at group meetings.

As a final project, the group members each write a brief report on one of the topics they discussed with their partner and illustrate it with drawings. They share their reports with the rest of the group.

With the nursing home's permission, a dessert party is held with the residents who participated in the project, and the illustrated reports are available for viewing.

PART IV: PRESENTING YOUR EASE PROJECT TO THE PUBLIC

Once they have completed Project EASE, many youth groups may wish to make some form of public presentation. For example, 4-H clubs can develop a Project EASE display for their state fair, and school groups can prepare a presentation for the PTA or for other students. Remember: You have an important story to tell the public about intergenerational partnerships.

Public presentations are a good idea for two reasons. They allow participants in Project EASE to receive recognition and esteem, and they also help others better understand and value intergenerational activities.

Here are some hints for presenting your project at public events and for reaching others through the media. Wherever possible, invite your group's elder partners to join in the presentations.

- Have your group create a video about your project.

  Video can be a very effective way of recording the intergenerational activities. Elder participants or parents of youth group members may own or have access to a video cassette recorder. Youth and elders can plan the content of the video together and decide on locations where it can be shown.

- Have your group members keep a written journal of the project, illustrated with photographs or artwork.

  Include in the journal written descriptions, illustrations, and photographic depictions of every step of your group's project, from the first planning meetings through the final project.

- Have your group put on an intergenerational dramatic production, dance workshop, or recital.

  This is a suitable activity for a group participating in a project that involves theatrical or musical activities. The final production can be performed for audiences at a fair, school open house, senior center, or other suitable settings.

- Have each group member write an essay or poem about their experiences with their older partners in Project EASE.

  Ask them to include feelings and perceptions about their elder partners and the aging process and to consider what it will be like when they are older. Elder partners may also want to write an essay or poem, perhaps telling what they learned about young people through Project EASE.

- Have your group create a display using tangible products of their intergenerational partnerships.

  Arts, crafts, or food that the youth and elders made together as part of an intergenerational project can be taken to fairs and other public events.

- Give a talk about Project EASE to schools, community groups, or on local radio and cable television stations.

  A wide variety of groups are likely to find reports on intergenerational programs interesting. Local newspapers can be invited to cover such talks, which will spread the word about your project.

APPENDIX: WORKING WITH NURSING HOMES

Leaders whose youth groups engage in projects with nursing homes need to be aware of several important considerations. Initially, nursing homes can seem like strange and disturbing places to children. **Nursing home projects are much more effective when special preparation is given to youth group members.** This appendix provides background information and suggestions for additional activities that will help make a nursing home project more effective.

WHAT IS A NURSING HOME?

Nursing homes are long-term care institutions for elderly individuals with chronic health problems. They should not be confused with residential facilities (such as rest homes, adult homes, or congregate housing), which provide housing for relatively healthy elders. Nursing homes are similar to hospitals in the equipment and staff they support. However, they care for elderly persons over the long term, unlike hospitals, which provide acute care. Most individuals who live in nursing homes need round-the-clock medical supervision for psychological or physical health problems. More than half of all nursing home residents have some form of dementia such as Alzheimer's disease.

Nevertheless, many residents in nursing homes can benefit from intergenerational programs. In turn, they have much to teach young people about what it is like to grow old. In particular, the one-on-one matching project is very appropriate for nursing home residents who are socially isolated.

Preparation for a nursing home project, however, is essential. Children and adolescents who visit nursing homes for the first time are often scared by what they see. The equipment and the condition of some residents are unfamiliar and frightening for many young people not used to health care settings. For this reason, it is very important that your youth group members are specially prepared to work with a nursing home. If young people know what to expect, they will feel much more comfortable when visiting a nursing home.

AN EXTRA PREPROJECT SESSION

In addition to the planning meetings your group will be having, you should seriously consider having a special meeting of your group before beginning your project with nursing home residents. Invite a nursing home staff representative to this session, and ask him or her to speak in depth about:

- nursing home life (e.g., schedules, activities)
- the staff people who are on hand
- the treatments that are provided
- the age and physical abilities of most of their residents
- tips they can offer for working with these residents

If the activities coordinator or another staff person from the home cannot come to this meeting, invite another person who is knowledgeable about nursing homes. In any case, let the speaker know that the objective of his or her visit is to let your group members know what to expect when they enter the nursing home for the first time. Members should feel more comfortable about their ability to communicate and work effectively with the residents by the end of this meeting.

During this session, you also may want to conduct the sensitivity activities described at the end of this appendix. These exercises help the members understand what it is like to have some of the physical limitations they may encounter at the nursing home.

Finally, let your group know that less than 5 percent of all older people live in nursing homes, so all older adults are not like those they will be meeting in the nursing home. Help the group members understand that not all elders experience serious changes in health, and to appreciate the often creative ways older people use to adapt to such changes when they do occur.

CHECK-IN SESSIONS

After your group's first session in the nursing home, and periodically thereafter, you should hold meetings with the group members to discuss their reactions. Talk about the emotions the members have felt and the sights that may have confused or scared them. If a member of the nursing home staff is able to come to your first check-in session, he or she may be able to answer questions that the members have. During these meetings, be sure that the members discuss their feelings—both positive and negative—about working with the elders, and encourage them to be as open and honest as they can. These sessions may occur during your scheduled group meetings or at any other regular time throughout the project.

It is important that as leader you remain sensitive to the group members throughout the project. Be alert to any problems the members may have, and always be available to listen if they have concerns they would like to raise. If the project is long-term, group members may see residents they know become ill or possibly die. You (and possibly a nursing home staff member) should always be available to discuss members' feelings about such events.

SENSITIVITY ACTIVITIES*

One way to help your group members become more sensitive to the problems nursing home residents experience is to simulate these experiences with your group. Using common objects, group members can feel for themselves, and thereby better understand, what it is like to have certain limitations.

Several ways to simulate the sensory loss that affects many nursing home residents are described below. You may wish to conduct a few of these activities.

Sharing feelings should be encouraged. Often the group will find that the activities are fun and humorous but become more serious when the members realize that such sensory impairments are a daily burden for many nursing home residents. Although you might want to introduce these activities to your group before your first meeting with nursing home residents, they are also valuable after youths and seniors have met together. At that point your group members may have concerns and questions they wish to express.

In a small group, it will be possible to do several activities in succession. In a larger group, you may wish to have several tables with different activities and have members move from table to table.

*Adapted from *Sensitizing People to the Processes of Aging: The In-Service Educator's Guide* by Marvin Ernst and Herbert Shore, Dallas Geriatric Research Institute, 1977.

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN HEARING AND SIGHT

1. Use a set of swimmer's ear plugs, earmuffs, or a stocking hat to dull the sound of people talking. Have each participant follow softly spoken directions on how to accomplish a simple task such as separating an egg. Time the participant to illustrate how hearing loss may affect how fast a person accomplishes a given assignment.

2. Have two or three group members give instructions to a participant at the same time. Ask the participant to repeat the instructions given. Have different members with different voice levels read aloud to the participant the same passage from behind a screen. Have members speak to the participant at differing speeds.

3. Emphasize the interrelation of vision and hearing. Have a blindfolded participant listen to instructions that are given at a fast pace. This will illustrate how often we depend upon seeing someone talk to hear what they are saying.

4. Smear eyeglasses with petroleum jelly and ask participants to perform simple tasks while wearing them.

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN TOUCH

1. Have each participant wear plastic gloves to simulate difficulties in distinguishing water temperatures and in grasping small objects. Ask each participant to pick up a small square of paper from the table.

2. Apply Numz-It, a liquid material used on babies' gums when they are teething, to a participant's fingers. It desensitizes the fingers for a short period of time.

3. Have a person wear a pair of thick gloves and then tie a shoe or do another similar intricate task, such as buttoning a shirt or buckling a belt.

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN DEXTERITY

1. One-handed exercises will demonstrate the difficulty encountered by a person who is missing a limb or who has lost the use of a limb. Have participants try to write their names using their left hands.
2. Wrap masking tape around several fingers or joints to represent a missing finger or stiffened joint. Have participants unscrew a jar lid or open a can.
3. Use elastic bandages to disrupt totally or partially the functioning of one limb such as a leg or a knee joint.

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN TASTE

1. Block out visual and smelling capacities by using a blindfold and cotton in the nose and have the participant identify an apple versus a potato (food with similar textures), or a potato chip versus a corn chip.
2. Blindfold participants and have them identify foods that have been pureed in a blender, such as lemons, beef, and pudding. Texture no longer aids in identification.

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN SMELL

1. Use nose plugs or pieces of cotton to block the nostrils. Have participants describe what it is they smell or taste. Use a range of foods: apples, oranges, peanut butter, and chocolate.
2. Blindfold participants and have them identify a range of odors.
3. Use one strong odor, such as musk oil, to mask other odors. Then have the participants try to tell you what the other odors are.

BECOMING SENSITIVE TO CHANGES IN MOBILITY AND BALANCE

1. Have participants attempt to carry a set of packages in their hand while trying to use a walker or a cane. (Note how few women's clothes have pockets in which women can carry possessions when using a walker.)
2. Have each participant sit in a desk chair and spin the chair around a few times. Then ask the participant to walk in a straight line. A person with a mobility problem experiences a similar dizziness.
3. Paste heavy sponge rubber on the bottom of a pair of shoes, or put the right shoe on the left foot, and have the participant walk in them.

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WARM-UP ACTIVITIES

CONTENTS

1 Introduction
2 Animals
3 Childhood Memories
4 The Five Senses
5 Fun with Reminiscing
6 Lifetime Changes
7 Slang: Then and Now
8 A Tray of Stuff

INTRODUCTION

These activities will help you "break the ice" between the old and young participants in your newly formed intergenerational group. A variety of activities from different sources are included so you can choose the activity most appropriate for your group. Some activities are better for the first introduction of the elders to the youth, and some can be used as starter activities for additional planning meetings. You may know of some warm-up activities that aren't listed here. If you feel they are appropriate, feel free to use them.

ANIMALS

TIME REQUIRED

- 15 minutes

MATERIALS

- none

PROCEDURE

1. Arrange your intergenerational group in a circle.

2. Ask the members to introduce themselves to the group, one at a time around the circle, by stating their name and then what animal they think they are most like and why.

VARIATIONS

Instead of animals, use other categories, such as fruits and vegetables or inanimate objects.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

TIME REQUIRED

- 30 minutes

MATERIALS

- none

PROCEDURE

1. Explain to the group that they will be sharing their favorite (or one of their favorite) childhood memories with each other and that they should start thinking of those memories now.

2. Have each youth pair up with an elder.

3. Instruct the youth to begin by telling the elders their favorite childhood memories. Ask them to keep their stories as short and concise as they can, but try to give all the participants enough time to finish.

4. Then have the elder members of each pair tell their favorite childhood memories. Again, ask them to keep their stories short and concise, but try to give them all time to finish.

5. Reassemble in a large group and ask for volunteers to share their partner's memories with the group. Share as many stories as time allows.

THE FIVE SENSES

TIME REQUIRED

- 20 to 30 minutes

MATERIALS

- none

PROCEDURE

1. Divide the intergenerational group into five small groups, designating each group as one of the five senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting). Each group should have an equal number of older and younger members.

2. Ask everyone to think back to when they were 6 to 8 years old (depending upon the age range of your club members). Ask the groups to discuss the memories that fit into their sense category. For example, members of the hearing group could describe the sounds they remember when they were 6 to 8—perhaps a jump rope hitting concrete or the favorite songs of that time.

3. Allow the groups at least 10 to 15 minutes to discuss their memories, and then have everyone come together.

4. Ask each group to present their memories to the large group, one sense at a time, and allow conversation at any time.

FUN WITH REMINISCING

TIME REQUIRED

- 20 to 25 minutes

MATERIALS

- old magazines
- a few pairs of scissors
- a cut-out picture to use as an example

PROCEDURE

1. Divide everyone into groups of four to six people. Make sure each group has at least one elder participant (an equal number of old and young in each group is best).

2. Bring out the magazines and explain that everyone is to cut out a picture that reminds them of something that happened in the past. Their memory can be about anything—people, food, or events.

3. After everyone has selected a picture and cut it out, ask them to take turns explaining to their group the memory it recalls. As an example, show a picture you've cut out and explain why you picked it. (For instance, "I cut out this picture of a station wagon because it reminds me of the family trips we used to take when I was a boy. Our dog, Crumbly, liked to put his head out the window and let his tongue hang in the breeze. My little brother once got in trouble for trying to do what Crumbly did.")

4. Tell them that the memories can be short or long and that it is okay to ask questions of the person describing the memory.

LIFETIME CHANGES

TIME REQUIRED

- 20 to 30 minutes

MATERIALS

- none

PROCEDURE

1. Have each youth pair up with a senior so that everyone has a partner.

2. Discuss with the entire group the changes that may take place in the world during a person's lifetime (for example, changes in technology, popular music, and lifestyles). You may want to list categories on newsprint or a blackboard, including the following:

- transportation
- clothing
- popular music
- technology
- work
- school
- politics
- international affairs

3. Instruct the seniors to talk with their partner about the changes that have occurred in the world since they were young.

4. When discussion dies down, have the pairs switch roles, and ask the youth in each pair to talk about the changes that have occurred since they were younger. When they are done, ask them to predict what changes may occur in the world as they grow older. Each pair should then discuss these predictions.

5. After allowing ample time for discussion, call the participants back into the large group. Going around the room, have each member discuss some of the high points of the life changes that their partner discussed with them. (If time is short, you may need to limit this discussion and have just a few volunteers speak instead.)

SLANG: THEN AND NOW

TIME REQUIRED
- 15 minutes

MATERIALS
- none

PROCEDURE

1. Have the youth and elders sit in a group so that everyone can see everyone else.

2. Explain that you will be discussing slang words, which are words that are popularly used when speaking but wouldn't be used in formal writing. Slang changes with every generation—some words disappear or take on new meanings and other words spring up in their place. "Cool," "rad," and "cat's pajamas" are examples of generation-specific slang words.

3. Make a list of categories for slang words, such as

- clothing
- cars
- boys and girls
- friends
- expressions

For each category, ask the youth and elders to say slang words or expressions as they think of them and give their definition. Encourage members of the other generation to mention words that they have used which might carry the same connotation. Allow discussion of the words as the group desires.

A TRAY OF STUFF

TIME REQUIRED

- 15 minutes

MATERIALS

- a tray full of various small objects, e.g., a bottle cap, a safety pin, a rubber band, a clothespin, a small animal figurine (The objects can be anything—the more creative the better—and there should be more objects than participants.)

PROCEDURE

1. Take your tray of objects around the room and ask each participant to examine all the items on the tray and then pick one that reminds them of someone or something about themselves.

2. After everyone has picked an object, go around the room and ask the participants, one by one, what or who they were reminded of and why.

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POLARITY ACTIVITY

GOAL

- To help young people consider issues related to aging and understand how they view older citizens

GROUP SIZE

- any number

TIME REQUIRED

- approximately 20 minutes

MATERIALS

- 5 sets of the incomplete sentence–response sheets (photocopied or copied by hand from the following pages)
- tape or pins to fasten the response sheets on walls

INTRODUCTION

Say to the group:

We may not think of it very often, but most of us have thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about older people, or about becoming old ourselves. These different feelings are sometimes based on someone we know or on some experience we have had before. All our feelings are okay to have, and it is interesting to learn about the feelings of others.

One way to help us take a look at these thoughts and feelings is through an activity called "Polarity." This activity is named "Polarity" because sometimes the way we see something is much different from the way someone else sees it. Polarity is a word that describes being on different sides of an issue.

The activity works this way: I'll read an incomplete statement and you decide which of the statements that will be posted on the wall describes most closely how you feel or think. Then each of you should go and stand by that statement. After everyone stands where they feel they belong, we'll discuss our reasons for feeling or thinking the way we do. There are no good, bad, right, or wrong answers.

PROCEDURE

Incomplete Statements and Responses

Being around old people...
- makes me nervous or scared.
- is kind of boring.
- is fun and interesting.
- makes me sad.

When it comes to friends, most senior citizens...
- have a lot of friends.
- are lonely and isolated.

In terms of mood, old people...
- are usually happier than younger people.
- are about as happy as younger people.
- are less happy than younger people.

When it comes to health, most old people...
- have just one health problem after another.
- are in good health.

Most old people...
- are very set in their ways.
- are excited and open to new experiences.

1. Choose an incomplete statement and fasten the responses to that statement on separate walls. It is important to use separate walls so that when the youth make their choices, their groups will be clearly separated.

2. Read the incomplete statement. Give the youth time to think of which response on the wall best reflects their own thoughts.

3. Tell the youth to stand by the response they have chosen.

4. When all the youth are grouped by the response they selected, ask a person from one response group to explain to the others his or her reasons for choosing that response. Then ask a member of another group to do the same. Let as many young people explain their choice as time allows. Then move on to the next incomplete statement.

Being around old people...

makes me nervous or scared.

Being around old people...

is kind of boring.

Being around old people...

is fun and interesting.

Being around old people...

makes me sad.

When it comes to friends, most senior citizens...

have a lot of friends.

When it comes to friends, most senior citizens...

are lonely and isolated.

In terms of mood, old people...

are usually happier than younger people.

In terms of mood, old people...

are about as happy as younger people.

In terms of mood, old people...

are less happy than younger people.

When it comes to health, most old people...

have just one health problem after another.

When it comes to health, most old people...

are in good health.

Most old people...

are very set in their ways.

Most old people...

are excited and open to new experiences.

5. When all five statements have been discussed, bring the group together and talk about the activity. The following questions may help initiate a discussion:

- Did anyone give a reason for selecting their response that reminded you of your own situation?
- If you could do the activity over again, would you select a different response for any of the incomplete statements?
- Do you think someone had an especially good reason for their choice?
- Did you learn anything you didn't know before?

Note: As the group leader, you have a very important job in this activity. It is important that you **not** get involved in the discussion. Rather, make sure people's ideas are heard and perhaps clarified. Make sure everyone understands that they should respect the feelings of others and that there is no correct way to feel.

Before reading the statements, it is a good idea to set some ground rules, such as the following:

- Please let everyone speak who would like to.
- Remember that everyone's ideas are of value.

You can also explain that to give everyone a chance to speak, you may have to interrupt someone occasionally—and you would like the group to understand when you do.

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AGING TRUE-FALSE ACTIVITY

TRUE	FALSE	QUESTIONS
❑	❑	1. It is normal to become very forgetful when you are old.
❑	❑	2. Older people no longer learn new things.
❑	❑	3. It is normal for the elderly to turn up the volume of the television slightly to hear better.
❑	❑	4. Many older people need a lot of light to see well.
❑	❑	5. Most senior citizens live in nursing homes.
❑	❑	6. Bones of older people become light and brittle.
❑	❑	7. Older people are not as smart as they were when they were young.
❑	❑	8. It is normal for the personalities of older people to change a great deal.
❑	❑	9. Older people often feel that life is no longer worth living.
❑	❑	10. Old people are more likely than young people to be victims of crime.
❑	❑	11. Most old people are lonely and isolated.
❑	❑	12. Older people are not as strong as they were when they were young.
❑	❑	13. Younger people are better workers than older people.

ANSWERS

1. It is normal to become very forgetful when you are old.

FALSE. Older people may be forgetful and confused as the result of strokes or other damage to the nervous system. There is no proof that growing old causes people to lose their memory. In fact, scientific studies show most people over 65 have good memories.

2. Older people no longer learn new things.

FALSE. The phrase "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" certainly doesn't apply to older people. In fact, older people can learn new things just as well as young people, although it may take them a bit longer.

3. It is normal for the elderly to turn up the volume of the television slightly to hear better.

TRUE. Although all old people don't lose their hearing, people over 65 are about three times more likely to have poor hearing than young people.

4. Many older people need a lot of light to see well.

TRUE. As with hearing, people are more likely to have trouble seeing as they grow older. All five senses tend to become less sharp with age.

5. Most senior citizens live in nursing homes.

FALSE. Actually, fewer than 5 percent of the people over 65 live in nursing homes or other similar residences. About 80 percent of us will never be in such a facility no matter how long we live. Older adults are much more likely to live in private homes with their spouses.

6. Bones of older people become light and brittle.

TRUE. As people age, it is normal for calcium to be drained from their bones in a process called osteoporosis. This makes the bones of many older people brittle and easily broken. Exercise and special attention to nutrition, however, may be able to slow this process.

7. Older people are not as smart as they were when they were young.

FALSE. There is no proof that people lose their intelligence as they age. In fact, certain studies show that they are just as smart as, if not smarter than, young people.

8. It is normal for the personalities of older people to change a great deal.

FALSE. Although small personality changes happen throughout life, our personalities remain pretty much the same, no matter how old we get.

9. Older people often feel that life is no longer worth living.

FALSE. Actually, most older people feel just as happy as when they were younger. The majority are healthy enough to continue doing the things they enjoy, so they are very satisfied with life. Most expect pleasant things to happen to them in the future.

10. Old people are more likely than young people to be victims of crime.

FALSE. It is true that older people are more afraid of becoming victims of crime than young people. But in fact, they are less likely to have crimes committed against them.

11. Most old people are lonely and isolated.

FALSE. Most older people live close to their children and visit with family often, and most say they are never or hardly ever lonely. The majority of the elderly are members of synagogues or churches, and many join clubs and other organizations.

12. Older people are not as strong as they were when they were young.

TRUE. As people age they lose their strength, partly because their muscles get smaller.

13. Younger people are better workers than older people.

FALSE. Many studies find that older people can do a job just as well as younger people. As mentioned earlier, people can learn new skills at any age, and elderly people often do better because they have more experience.

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